

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION**

Please insert the following section headings on page 1, after the title and at line 2:

**-- BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**1) Field of the Invention --**

Please replace the paragraph on page 1, beginning at line 3, with the following replacement paragraph:

-- The present invention relates to a method for releasing a slug adhering to a stamp in a punching machine ~~as according to the preamble of claim 1~~. The invention also relates to a punching machine for releasing a slug which is adhering to a stamp ~~as according to the preamble of claim 8~~. --

Please insert the following section heading on page 1, at line 23:

**-- 2) Description of the Related Art --**

Please insert the following section heading on page 1, at line 33:

**-- SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION --**

Please replace the paragraph on page 1, beginning at line 34, and continuing on page 2, with the following replacement paragraph:

-- The object of the present invention is to provide an improved method and punching machine ~~of the type stated in the preamble~~ with which certainty can be provided in relatively simple manner in respect of separating slug and stamp. The invention provides for this purpose a method for releasing a slug adhering to a stamp in a punching machine ~~as according to the claim 1~~. The method according to the invention is based on the insight that a punched-out sheet part will expand when it is not wholly surrounded at the position where the slug was originally connected to the remaining part of the sheet material or by a cutting opening clampingly enclosing the sheet material. During the punching operation considerable forces are exerted whereby the sheet material is subjected, along other things, to (limited) plastic compression. After the thus compressed material is released, it will return to a more original (expanded) form. Use is now made of this (small) enlargement of the punched-out sheet part. After the slug has been carried at least partially through the cutting opening, the described expansion will take

place. As the cutting opening engages close-fittingly round the stamp, the expanded slug will no longer move back with the stamp in the cutting opening during the return stroke; the edge of the cutting opening serves to hold back the edge of the expanded slug projecting from the stamp. This therefore results in the certainty that the slug is not carried back to the processed material layer. In contrast to the present invention, use is made in the most approximate prior art of deformation of a resilient material layer assembled with the punching device; this differs expressly from the insight according to the present invention wherein use is made of the deformation of the slug. Other than in the described prior art, a deformable elastic layer is unnecessary in the method according to the invention. Such a layer being unnecessary is advantageous, among other reasons, because such a layer is relatively susceptible to wear and has the drawback of forming a source of contamination. --

Please insert the following section heading on page 5, at line 7:

-- BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS --

Please insert the following section heading on 5, at line 25:

-- DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS --